

# Precarization of Working Class Roma through Spatial Deprivation, Labor Destitution and Racialization

Enikő Vincze

eni\_personal@yahoo.com

Manuscript received: 27 September 2015.

Modified manuscript received: 30 November 2015.

Acceptance of manuscript for publication: 5 December 2015.

**Abstract:** This article addresses the topic of the current issue of the journal (processes of poverty and social exclusion) by (re)framing the working class position of dispossessed Roma through a case study conducted in Romanian localities. The situation of the Roma is due to the fact that they stand at an intersection: the product of a combination of their precarious spatial position, the nature of the labor that they have access to and the racialization of both poverty and Roma ethnicity. Moreover, this position is shaped by the relationship of the Roma to capital; the Roma being the group most adversely affected by de-industrialization, deregulation of the labor and housing market, and through the re-regulation of property relationships; in particular real estate goods. The latter processes produce poverty and social exclusion, among other things, because they increase the unevenness of development across regions, counties, localities and within settlements, and lead to the creation of insecure and underpaid jobs or structural unemployment. Dispossessed of the means of production, and also of (state) support for adequate housing (one of the resources for the social reproduction of the labor force), the impoverished Roma take up poorly paid formal employment or engage in insecure informal labor either domestically or abroad; a phenomenon that aggravates their exploitation as a working class undergoing a severe process of precarization. The analysis in this paper is based on the empirical results of qualitative research conducted between 2012–2014 in several localities in Romania under the umbrella of the contextual inquiry *Faces and Causes of Marginalization of the Roma in Local Settings*. Going beyond the initial theoretical frame of that research, which addressed the role of ethnic relations to other factors which affect the inclusion/exclusion of the Roma, this article responds to the need to better understand these processes in terms of how the system adversely impacts dispossessed Roma via their exploitation as workers whose precarization is a result of their position at the crossroads of spatial deprivation, labor-related destitution and racialization. In this endeavor, the article relies on the conclusions of another investigation that understands the socio-territorial exclusion of dispossessed Roma as form of racialized class exploitation.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> This research is entitled *Spatialization and racialization of Roma exclusion. The social and cultural formation of 'Gypsy ghettos' in Romania in a European context* and is supported by a grant from the Romanian National Authority for Scientific Research, CNCS – UEFISCDI, project number PN-II-ID-PCE-2011-3-0354. Related to this, discussions with Norbert Petrovici, Cristina RaD and Anca Simionca that paralleled the writing of the present article helped create new insight into the old empirical material collected through the contextual inquiry *Faces and causes of marginalization of the Roma in local settings*.

## Introduction

The political economy landscape of the three Romanian localities that this article refers to (Aiud, Calafat and Lungani) is not unique in terms of the distribution of the impacts of modern global capitalism, although it is marked by de-industrialization and the related precarization of labor created by the informalization of employment (Bremen 2013), which creates both insecurity and degradation of the sources needed for its own reproduction. However, case studies of these localities have provided a specific opportunity to address how the latter phenomena are intertwined with the informalization of housing (in terms of increases in insecurity and degradation of quality). Moreover, examination of these cases has the potential to highlight how labor- and housing-related processes are underpinned by the racialization of the poor and the racialization of the Roma (ethnicity), and ultimately, how these forces are combining to precarize working class Roma at local levels; the specific focus of this article, which takes an innovative research approach.

The city of *Aiud* (Alba County, Center Development Region) was significantly affected by the collapse of one of the country's most important industrial platforms, the local metallurgical factory (IMA), which during the socialist era and the first years of the 1990s employed approximately 8000 people. In 2013 IMA went bankrupt and by 2014 was employing a maximum of 500 workers. From our interviews we learnt that during 2009-2010 many other big companies in Aiud, especially Italian and German textile firms, also closed up. Firms with Romanian capital, in particular construction and prefabricated material companies, reduced their activity by 30%-50%. Today some small firms (textile, shoe-making, and construction) continue to exist, employing from 50-200 workers. The local prison is also an important employer (359 employees), but it offers no jobs for people with a lower level of education. In the residential areas of Aiud which are inhabited mostly by ethnic Roma (*Bufa*, *Poligon*, *Feleud*) we could identify almost no employee with a valid legal contract (and more specifically, extremely few employment contracts for an undetermined/permanent period of time). Moreover, even if the majority of inhabitants (or their ancestors) have lived on those territories for decades, the majority had no real estate ownership documents (either for land or houses). This housing-related insecurity makes them vulnerable to private investors who could purchase their land for development purposes.

The city of *Calafat* (Dolj County, South-West Oltenia Development Region) was once an attractive industrial center, even for commuters from nearby villages, but it is no longer. The former industrial profile of the locality, the very basis of its socialist urbanization and associated population growth, was completely restructured after 1990. The majority of factories closed, and at the moment only one clothes factory, one plastics factory, and one which produces soft drinks still function. The agricultural terrain around the city has been obtained by Italian investors. Consequently, the number of jobs which are available is much reduced; however there are still more in

the city than in the rural areas of the county. The vast majority of Roma from the neighborhoods (*Rudărie* and *Dunării*) are laboring in the informal economy (*rudari* Roma collect scrap iron or pets, while *spoitori* Roma trade second hand cars). Some Roma who migrate to do seasonal work can afford to buy houses from the Romanians living in their proximity, but the majority of buildings or shelters in which Roma live (within older residential areas) are not legally owned.

During the socialist era, the vast majority of the population of the community of *Lungani* (Iași County, North-East Development Region) worked in agriculture on one of the six production farms, or in a brigade, all belonging to the Agricultural Production Cooperative Lungani (C.A.P.). There were 4999 registered cooperative members in the C.A.P., but only about half were effectively active. The decrease in this rural population resulted from socialist economic restructuring: large industrial or mining projects in cities across Romania attracted a mostly male labor force from the villages of Moldova, and Lungani (with its constituent villages *Cruceu* and *Zmeu*) was no exception to this trend. As a result, the importance of the female labor force in the village grew. Today, in the commune of Lungani there are basically no formal employment opportunities. The only successful local businesses are bars, land-leasing and animal husbandry and trade ventures. Besides these profit-oriented economic activities (for which workers are hired only informally, on a daily/seasonal basis), there exist a few jobs in the public sphere (e.g. local administration or schools), but very few of the employees of these jobs are Roma (at the time of writing, the health mediator, the elementary school teacher, the kindergarten educator and the Romani language teacher).

I had the opportunity to learn about the above-described localities in the context of a larger contextual inquiry into the faces and causes of marginalization of the Roma, conducted in several phases in Romania between 2012 and 2014 (Vincze-Hossu, 2014; Vincze 2014b; Vincze, 2015 in print). The aim of the contextual inquiry was “to map the differing conditions of Roma and non-Roma in the domains of education, employment and work, housing and infrastructure and representation and participation in local policy-making and politics, and to reveal differences in access and provisions in the aforementioned areas that the aggregate (average) indicators for the communities-at-large may hide.”<sup>2</sup>

The analysis contained in the present article goes beyond the initial theoretical frame of the former. It responds to the need to understand these processes as a

2 This research in Romania was conducted within the frame of “*Faces and Causes of Marginalization of the Roma in Local Settings: Hungary - Romania - Serbia. Contextual inquiry to the UNDP/World Bank/IEC Regional Roma Survey 2011*”. A joint initiative of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the Open Society Foundation’s Roma Initiatives Office (RIO) and the Making the Most of EU Funds for Roma Inclusion program, and the Central European University/Center for Policy Studies (CEU CPS). This qualitative investigation unfolded through two major phases of empirical investigation: one addressed the broader, primary issue (the faces and causes of Roma marginalization) by focusing on *Tools and methods for evaluation and data collection*, while the other - in Romania restricted to three localities and conducted under the title *Causes and Faces of Exclusion of the Roma in Local Communities*, identified and described the dimensions and mechanisms of exclusion and inclusion as processes affected by ethnic relations. A more detailed description of the whole endeavor which ran from October 2012 to June 2014 is available here: <http://cps.ceu.hu/research/roma-marginalization>

manifestation of how the economic system (across political regimes) adversely incorporated the dispossessed Roma. However, this analysis does not incorporate a detailed contextual investigation of the different historical stages of this process: for example, of the Roma as slaves till the middle of the 19th century in the former Romanian states; or the transformation of 'unproductive Zigani' into 'new citizens', or 'new farmers' by the assimilationist Austro-Hungarian regime in Transylvania; or as a 'Gypsy population' unrecognized during socialism as a national minority, but assimilated as a labor force to serve the development of the socialist economy.

Instead, this article centers on how the modern-day incorporation of working class Roma into the capitalist economy is culminating in their precarization. By introducing the concept of precarization into the analysis, I do not seek to claim that the precariat should be considered a distinct social class, separate from other (more privileged) workers (as Standing claimed in 2011; critiqued by Bailey 2012 and Breman 2013). However, this does not prevent me from acknowledging the predominance of the class conflict which exists between labor and capital which is overwriting the internal differentiation between the working class and the different Roma groups that self-identify via the crafts of their ancestors. Instead, I appeal to the concept of precarization in order to highlight the fact that the insecure spatial and labor position of dispossessed Roma (and the informalization of housing and employment, amplified by an increase in deprivation) are interconnected, and are entwined with racialization.

In order to deal with this complexity, after briefly describing the methodological and theoretical bases of my analysis in three descriptive chapters I focus on each of these aspects separately (even though I also synthesize them in the analysis), while the final conclusion of the article makes an attempt to reconnect them in a synthetic explanatory whole. The first two descriptive chapters of the article rely on statistical data, on small-scale observations and on interviews conducted with members of Roma families. They highlight not only the recent housing- and labor-related experiences of the latter, but also give a sense of how the spatial position and labor market position of the Roma have been defined in local societies across political regimes and have gone through changes, yet the Roma remain in an easily exploitable position of subordination. The third descriptive chapter tackles how the dispossessed Roma are racialized discursively by the non-Roma majority. It observes that this racialization acts to dispossess Roma of personhood in relation to a supposedly universal 'Roma'; however, as a strategy, it is also adopted by the better-off Roma when they wish to distance themselves from their most precariously situated ethnic fellows. Ultimately, I demonstrate that precarization is a multifaceted process which is characterized by both the insecure spatial position and deprived housing conditions of working class Roma in the locality, along with their insecure and underpaid position on the labor market and the racialization of impoverished labor and the racialization of Roma ethnicity (regardless of the class

of people of Roma identity). The final conclusion of this article further develops this idea and is the major theoretical contribution of the analysis.

## Methodological and theoretical frames of the analysis

For the first step, the above-mentioned contextual investigation investigated 25 localities in Romania (five small cities and 20 communes in their proximity, each including at least two villages). They were selected from five counties (Alba, Arad, Călărași, Dolj and Iași) from different development regions of Romania (Centre, West, South-West Oltenia, South Muntenia, and North-East). These settlements were either chosen from the UNDP-2011 survey sample,<sup>3</sup> or were located in the proximity of the small cities from this sample which we included in the post-survey contextual inquiry (Vincze 2014b: 70). We began the latter investigation with 'socio tours' which were accomplished within institutions and among people in leadership positions in the locality. By means of these tours we generated several social-mental maps that reflected the spatial position of 'Roma segments' and 'poor segments' in the localities and we identified a number of local actors connected with the marginalization of the Roma, as well as a set of issues acknowledged as problems at a local level. For the next step we conducted structured interviews at institutions (public administration, schools, companies), and held discussions with people living in the 'Roma segments' of the localities, and also with NGO representatives and informal and formal Roma leaders. 'Looking at education, access to work and employment, the patterns and qualities of housing, the conditions of living, and the state of Roma participation in public and political life [...] we asked for data, estimates and assessments. [...] it was less the reported figures and numerical values than their contextualization that mattered.' (Szalai 2014: 29-30). Our mixed research team completed these local empirical endeavors by mapping onto the localities in the five scrutinized counties statistical data about the percentage and spatial distribution of Roma population, including access to gymnasium schools and emergency health-care services as regards geographical distance and time across the five counties; percentage of homes connected to the public water supply across the five counties; total number of employees, number of employers with over five employees and between 5-10 employees in the 25 localities. As a result of this process we were able to: analyze what kind of data was available at a local and county level;

3 According to the publication *Integrated Household Surveys Among Roma Population. One Possible Approach to Sampling Used by the UNDP/World Bank/EC Regional Roma Survey 2011*, "the Regional Roma Survey 2011 was completed in cooperation with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), World Bank, the European Commission (EC), and in coordination with the European Union's Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA). [...]The UNDP/WB/EC survey was conducted in May-July 2011 on a random sample of Roma and non-Roma households living in areas with higher density (or concentration) of Roma populations in the EU Member States of Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Hungary, Romania, Slovakia, and the non-EU Member States of Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, FYR of Macedonia, Montenegro, Republic of Moldova and Serbia", accessible here: <http://www.undp.org/content/dam/rbec/docs/Roma-household-survey-methodology.pdf>. A brief summary of the survey results are presented in the report and are available here: [http://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra\\_uploads/2099-FRA-2012-Roma-at-a-glance\\_EN.pdf](http://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra_uploads/2099-FRA-2012-Roma-at-a-glance_EN.pdf).

identify what information people know (and how they know it); estimate and assess the condition of 'the Roma' in the locality; describe the local public administration context, development programs and socio-cultural institutions; distinguish the areas inhabited predominantly by people (self)identified as Roma; depict the state of school participation and segregation, quality of education and educational programs in the local school network; clarify what opportunities for employment exist, including the occupational profiles of the localities, employment relationships and development programs in the domain of employment; and learn about Roma representation and participation: i.e. the degree to which 'the Roma' enter the public agenda (and how), what the recognized forms of Roma political representation are, and how the Roma participate in social, civic and cultural life.

During the subsequent part of this contextual inquiry our research team<sup>4</sup> scrutinized three localities out of the sample of the 25 settlements more deeply (the cities of Aiud and Calafat, and the commune Lungani with its three villages, Lungani, *Zmeu* and *Crucea*). Through family interviews we revealed local histories of cohabitation; in particular, the nature of the historical formation of Roma communities in local contexts, but also the differences between Roma and non-Roma families, and between Roma families who belong to various *neamuri* ('nations', or groups with different ancestry) and/or with different housing, school education and income-generating activities/conditions, and also public participation. Through these interviews conducted in (an institutional context at) schools, social service providers and workplaces, we learnt about the non-Roma perspective of the Roma as 'the other'. Last, but not least, through interviews and document analysis we became able to describe the development programs/projects that targeted (or did not target) marginalized Roma communities in the settlements or the areas these communities inhabit. In summary, the aim of this phase of inquiry was to identify the economic, social and policy-related factors that reproduce the social and territorial marginalization of the Roma in local contexts, along with the dimensions and mechanisms of exclusion and inclusion as processes affected by ethnic relations.

The current analysis interrogates the empirical material described above using research questions that belong to a different theoretical paradigm. In this attempt I use as a starting point the critique of social exclusion (Murray 2001; Bracking 2003), according to which the notion of differential or adverse incorporation into state, market or civil society is more appropriate when investigating chronic poverty than the idea of social exclusion (Hickey–du Toit 2007). Extending the authors'

4 As author of this article and country coordinator of the contextual inquiry, I hereby express my gratitude to my colleagues who conducted in-depth fieldwork in the selected Romanian localities: Rafaela Maria Muraru and Florina Pop (Alba county), Lulia-Elena Hossu and Ramona Făcăleă (Arad county), Elena Mihalache, Andrei Mihail Tudor and Elena Trifan (Călărași county), Adrian-Nicolae Furtună and Mihaela Preda (Dolj county), Cătălin Dîrău, Bogdan Herăanu and Margareta Herăanu (Iași county), and also to Daniel Tudora, who made a major contribution to the mapping of localities on the base of available statistical data, as well as to Nicolae Arsene (Călărași), Violeta Dumitru (Iași), Victor Făcăleă (Arad), Marcela ăerban (Alba Iulia) and Alina Tuăa (Craiova) who documented the relevant issues at the county level in the county center municipalities. Many colleagues from the above list were co-authors of the report that emerged from the first period of fieldwork, published in Romanian as Vincze and Hossu 2014.

examples from the field of the patron client relationship (Wood 2003), I affirm that the adverse incorporation perspective is capable of not only assimilating the exploitative components of power relationships, but is also useful in examining the institutional arrangements and cultural frameworks that make it difficult for those in subordinate positions to contest and leave these relationships of domination. Taking a step further towards a political economy approach, I suggest understanding adverse incorporation as a class phenomenon that integrates dispossessed Roma into the system as a labor force via transforming them into a commodity exploitable by the owners of different means of production. Since the current precarization of the spatial/housing and labor conditions of the Roma is happening in the context of a capitalist system (here, on the dismantlement of the socialist system of production), in order to interpret the personal experiences revealed by the interviews I rely on critical urban theory's interpretation of the connections between labor, capital and the political economy of space (Lefebvre 1968, 1974; Castells 1972; Harvey 1985, 2008; Brenner 2000, 2009). The latter demonstrates that capitalism has always used not only labor, but also (urban) space and housing as a source of capital accumulation, but that this is especially true of 21st century capitalism. Under the conditions of financialized global capitalism, expulsions from land (or dislocation/dispossession) represent opportunities for profit-creation. Accordingly, the housing insecurity faced by the working class (who are suffering from labor precarization), by becoming a potential source of profit for private investors, can be abused to 'clean up' residential spaces.

In the following chapters, on the basis of the discussed empirical material, the article describes how the process of precarization functions through (1) spatial deprivation, (2) labor-related destitution and (3) racialization. It will be observed that it is exactly the juxtaposition of these three phenomenon that circumscribes the situation of dispossessed or working class Roma - who exist in a deprived spatial position within the larger settlements that they belong to, are faced with labor-related destitution, and are racialized. The final conclusion of the article further elaborates on the multiple meanings of dispossession as applied to this case (dispossession of the normal rights of employees, of income that would allow Roma to lead a decent life, of legal domicile or legal identity, of development resources for the housing areas in which Roma live, and last but not least, dispossession of universal human rights and of personhood).

## Spatial deprivation

The need to identify income-generating resources was an important drive for Roma families to settle down for the first time in the localities and the specific areas we now encounter them in. Once settled, their economic activity assured them not only of their livelihood, but also (re)situated them in the local social hierarchy. This dynamic

between personal choices and achievements made through work and labor has always been impacted by the structural economic opportunities offered by different political regimes, and is also molded by the perceptions of the majority society about Roma and by how the latter acknowledge the value of Roma work. Moreover, the position of ethnic Roma on the labor market was not only determined by the political economies of different times, but it was gendered, too - in particular, by the domestic order of the Roma family, but also by the gender regimes that prevail in mainstream society. The extent to which the different Roma groups owned properties and means of production (or were dispossessed of these) fundamentally defined their economic dependence on the owner classes of their immediate environment, but also their capacity to self-organize economically and to generate resources for their members. *Vignette 1* in the Annexes portrays the large-scale evolution of the communities, with summaries extracted from family interviews that were conducted in the 'Roma segments' of these localities.

The differences between the "Roma segments" that are observable nowadays have arisen due to various factors, including the fact that the Roma are located in counties and regions with different levels of economic (under)development that is linked to a politics of development based on de-regulation. In itself, the latter reflects the uneven spatial distribution of resources across territorial divisions throughout Romania. Nevertheless, we observed that - with the exception of the cities of Curtici (Arad county, West Development Region), Aiud (Alba county, Central Development Region), Calafat (Dolj county, South-West Oltenia Development Region), and the Frumușani commune (Călărași county, South Muntenia Development Region) near to Romania's capital city, Bucharest - the locally-identified multiple 'Roma segments' were part of larger economically disadvantaged territories, while also being differentiated at the local scale due to their different degrees of precarization.

As already mentioned, at the end of 2012 fieldwork commenced in the selected localities with so-called socio tours which included discussions with various local actors about, among other things, their mental maps about the socio-ethnic divisions of the settlements. Due to this work we were quite quickly able to define the boundaries of spaces recognized by locals as localities inhabited predominantly by ethnic Roma (Roma segments) and/or poor housing areas. Regardless of the hypothesized level of risk of poverty (measured at the level of development of the region to which they belonged), in each and every locality in the selected counties we could identify spaces characterized by a territorial concentration of poverty, overlapping with residential zones inhabited predominantly by ethnic Roma, perceived as 'Gypsyhoods', regardless of the ethnic composition of the population actually inhabiting the territory (Vincze 2014b).

After qualitatively scanning this relatively high number of localities, we were able to conclude that the situation of ethno-spatial separation could be characterized both by severe material deprivation (mostly in the cases of forced segregation) and by

better-off economic circumstances (when territorial separation was proudly claimed). By observing in all of these localities the degree to which ('voluntary') ethno-spatial separation or potentially enforced segregation overlapped with socio-economic deprivation, a matrix was generated (see *Matrix 1* in Annexes, taken from Vincze 2014b: 92), in which the vertical axis portrays ethno-spatial separation/segregation, and the horizontal axis represents economic deprivation. Four types of situations are identified on this matrix, which actually describe 'Roma segments' inhabited by groups of self-identified Roma with different ancestry (altogether 52 cases, of which 35 are characterized by a state of significant material deprivation, while the remaining 17 are in better condition, but only relative to the former). The matrix displays the following combinations of characteristics: (1) a high level of ethnic separation and a high level of material deprivation (28 instances); (2) a high level of ethnic separation and a lower level of material deprivation (12 cases); (3) a low level of ethnic separation and a high level of material deprivation (7 instances); and (4) a low level of ethnic separation and a low level of material deprivation (5 cases). However, it should be added that even if ethnic separation has resulted from individuals 'voluntarily' settling down in areas more or less separate from the rest of the locality where the quality of housing and infrastructure is better than in the more deprived residential areas, this in itself is not protection against precarization. Even in this context individuals may be facing housing insecurity (i.e., not be in possession of property or rental documents for land or buildings). Moreover, one should always be very careful when determining an individual's motivation for settling down in an area, since the seemingly 'voluntary' character of a choice might be unintentional or masking economic constraints that are not under individual control.

Overall, across the localities, counties and development regions Roma who are located in less deprived residential areas are more successful in founding niches in the local economy that have been recognized by wider society as useful contributions to its functioning. As merchants, musicians or manufacturers, they have created alternative ways of living (even during socialist times) in parallel with their labor as employees in industries and agriculture. After their old working class jobs disappeared, these Roma found sources for their recovery more easily than their ethnic fellows who were totally dependent on the now-non-existent economic profiles of the localities. On the other hand, Roma who lost their former jobs and who were located to disadvantageous housing areas were transformed by post-socialist privatization and marketization from members of the employed working class to a state of severe precarization. Differently put, one may conclude that the ability of some Roma groups to sustain themselves economically and to resist current processes of precarization is partially rooted in the degree to which, during socialist times, they kept their economic autonomy in the context of an overarching state-owned economy. Most of the time such Roma consider themselves to be 'traditional' Roma and nurture a sense of superiority supposedly rooted in their 'culture' and ability to create a self-

sufficient system of subsistence. However, due to their subordination within the informal economy (from where they extract their sources of living), such Roma are not exempted from exploitation, even if they are in a dominant position in relation to the more precarious Roma, who might have similar ancestry. On the other hand, Roma who today consider themselves 'assimilated' or 'integrated' typically underwent an unfinished process of proletarianization during socialist times, which was long enough for them to develop a strong reliance on the job opportunities and welfare benefits that were dismantled after 1990. This is particularly true of such Roma who were employed as workers in mono-industrial settlements, or in agricultural cooperatives, and did not own property during the pre-socialist period. The vast majority of Roma could not partake of the benefits of property retrocession after 1990, and thus were competing on the market from a highly disadvantaged position - which has only increased in severity since then. These are the working class Roma who are most exposed to acute forms of precarization; however, their poverty is 'explained' or 'justified' via their racialization; i.e. they are associated with an inferior category of persons conceived of as sub-human, or lesser, and are then easily placed into the universal category of 'Roma', and are racialized a part of a larger ethnic group.

The Roma's depressed participation in formal employment at present is determined by the generally poor employment opportunities across the scrutinized localities which follows the dismantling of socialist industries and agricultural production. This situation is reflected, for example, by the low number of employers who have more than five employees (see *Table 1*). Across the five counties the median unemployment rate in 2011 was 9%, which was close to the national average (as reflected in the unemployment rate, illustrated in *Diagram 1*), but there were huge differences between our localities in this regard: the highest unemployment rate was found for Negoii commune in Dolj county (35%), and the lowest for the city of Curtici in Arad county (2%). Moreover, data about localities provided by the National Institute of Statistics (see *Table 2*) show that Arad County was top of the list regarding the percentage of the potentially economically active population employed (35%), while this percentage was lowest in Călărași County. However, the corresponding percentage from the city of Oltenița in Călărași (30%) was quite close to that observed in the city of Curtici in Arad County (31%). The rural areas of Arad county seem to have relatively good employment prospects too - in each of its communes approximately 15% of the potentially active population is employed, while the villages visited in Alba, Călărași, Dolj and Iași counties show the lowest potential for absorbing labor from the local labor market (below 5%, or even 4%).

## Labor-related destitution

As already described, the settling down of people in particular places has always been determined by their need to provide a source of income for themselves and

their families, and/ or to obtain raw materials for manufacturing goods; however it also depended on the opportunities created by political regimes in terms of housing and jobs. Individuals and families who were looking to make a living could only settle in social spaces that were made available by institutions and/or by other dwellers, and which they could afford. For these reasons, most of the time newcomer Roma 'chose' to establish their housing areas on the peripheries of localities, and this mostly happened in an informal way. Some of those who moved to cities during the socialist era were able to obtain apartments in socialist-era blocks of flats, or in nationalized buildings, and as far as the older inhabitants or their descendants are concerned, it was normal for them to also move into similar homes, while under modern capitalism – due to material constraints – many Roma end up 'voluntarily' returning to informal housing on the city margins, or as a result of being evicted.

The recollections of the adults that we interviewed in different localities reveal the wide spectrum of work-related paths that Roma have taken across the generations. As the examples portrayed in *Vignette 2* show, the dividing line between employment in the formal economy and informal labor at home or abroad becomes relative due to the fact that the insecure labor position of the Roma, dispossessed of the means of production, left them subject to exploitation and subordination, regardless of the political regime. However, nowadays this precarization is becoming more acute due to the neoliberal assault on the working class that generally increases its insecurity, instability, and vulnerability (Bailey 2012).

Under Socialism, the currently aging population of Roma from Aiud (especially from *Bufa* and *Poligon*) were employed at the local metallurgical factory (IMA) or at a sanitation company. They were fired after 1990 when the factory declared bankruptcy, and when the sanitation company was privatized and reduced its headcount. These Roma remember that these positions were filled by Romanians, Hungarians and Roma, and that the majority were dismissed regardless of ethnicity since, slowly, the whole unit was closed. In contrast to this, in the city of Calafat among the *rudari* Roma we learnt about family cases in which, before 1990, the adults had never had permanent employment contracts, but had obtained their first formal job only later; however this period of employment lasted only two years since the factory went bankrupt in 1996. But in the same *rudari* Roma community we also encountered families in which the pattern of work had changed across the generations; i.e., cases in which the parents of today's grownups were employed, while the latter had never had permanent job contracts. Despite the overall opinion that '*in the past it was better because you had a job*', or perhaps because they had the chance to socialize with Romanians, our Roma interviewees from Aiud recalled that they were hired for unskilled jobs and were able to feel that they were differentiated against since Roma did the heaviest forms of work. Some of the interviewees noted that working relations that they had established at those times with Romanians had helped them to find a new way of living. Opportunities for work were different

in urban and rural areas in all cases. Roma from *Feleud*, which was a separate village before its unification with Aiud, while employed in the factories of the city also looked for informal labor to supplement their incomes. Today they explain this by pointing to the fact that the Roma were poorer than non-Roma, and did not own land with which to supplement their incomes. Thus, they had to work for Romanians, or they collected and sold scrap iron. Moreover, some of those hired at IMA also worked informally on a daily basis at a farm near *Bufa* that they called the 'estate' (*moșie*). Divisions between formal employment and informal work also prevailed along gender lines. Narratives about Roma who were never formally employed ('never worked', as it is said), or who once had temporary jobs that they gave up to take care of children mostly refer to women in all of the scrutinized localities. Despite the fact that women's unpaid work is crucial for the reproduction of the family (and thus the working capacity of the family) this occupation was not considered 'work', but a 'natural duty'. During socialist times in rural Lungani, mainly *vătrași* or *lăieși* Roma from *Crucea* were hired to work at the local agricultural cooperative, while the local labor force underwent a process of feminization since adult men left the village (temporarily, or for good) to look for employment opportunities across the country in the developing socialist heavy industries.

Nowadays, only the poorest of the former agricultural workers remain in *Crucea*, the overwhelming majority of whom are Roma; they typically work informally as underpaid day laborers for big land owners. Totally dependent on this sub-standard income, they do not dare complain or demand their rights, more payment or more job security. Likewise, among the *rudari* families of the city of *Calafat* many look for informal seasonal subsistence jobs in agriculture and viticulture in other parts of Romania. Similar 'options' for informal labor in agriculture are available in the city of *Aiud*, too. Some local economic actors who make money from vineyards, livestock operations and construction have organized networks that unofficially and informally recruit workers for day laboring. Although they know that they work hard and are underpaid, Roma in *Bufa* say that this is their single source of income during some periods. Informal work is also prevalent at the industrial-profile companies in the cities as well. Our interviews show that in the last decade some of the Roma in *Aiud* have regularly worked illegally at local firms or institutions, typically doing the worst-paid jobs. Two of our Roma interviewees from *Bufa* mentioned that they had worked for three and ten years respectively for a private slaughterhouse where there were also other Roma employees. All of them worked without the correct legal documentation, unlike Romanian employees, who were hired with contracts. Although no claims of injustice were made in the case of layoffs at IMA, Roma in *Bufa* and *Poligon* complained about the sanitation company which used to employ them. Some of the Roma we interviewed say that after 1990 they remained at work in the sanitation company or in greenhouses because the town hall had a policy regarding Roma employment. They also say that what was happening then involved

a legal arrangement related to the hiring of young people similar to that which still exists today: graduates in firms that collaborate with the town hall are employed. After the sanitation company was privatized, the new management initiated massive layoffs of Roma, which our interviewees considered unjust. From then on, respondents claim, the Roma had no chance to obtain other formal jobs but only those with a guaranteed minimum wage. These jobs exist in the form of contracts through which the town hall makes conditional the allocation of social benefits on a minimum number of hours of work for the city/community. In the stories shared by our interviewees, child labor is strongly associated with the need to give up school in order to support the family, especially in the case of single parent or large families. This phenomenon occurs in the interviewees' narrations both in the period before and after 1990.

Another way that people at the moment are trying to cope with economic hardships is through seasonally migrating to take up transnational jobs. Both women and men we talked to in Roma communities spoke about the trials of travelling abroad to work. Many of them also spoke about the abuses to which they were subject from intermediaries, who are called *'tepari'* (someone who fools you, or impales you), because they force workers to accept contracts at a high cost, or with significant commission that is deducted from earnings. One of the most dramatic situations involved a Roma man in Aiud who reported that he was sequestered and relieved of his ID documents while he was working in Spain. Only with the help of the Red Cross did he manage to return home. *Rudari* Roma from Calafat, if they go abroad, work informally in agriculture but their destinies are marked by relations of dependency which are formed at home. Labor migration is more common in the case of *spoitori* Roma. This group engaged in seasonal internal migration before 1990, and quickly reverted to transnational migration after that. The *ursari* Roma from the village of *Zmeu* (Lungani) rapidly went abroad after 1990; being musicians, they could make a living and improve their housing conditions at home.

Currently, and in the case of all the Roma groups from all the selected localities, income generating work takes the form of informal labor (a pattern that was also in evidence before 1990 but to a different degree, and with different consequences). However, there are differences in this regard between the *lăieși* Roma of *Crucea* and the *ursari* Roma of *Zmeu* (Lungani), and between the *rudari* Roma and *spoitori* Roma from Calafat, the Roma of *Poligon* and those from *Buța* and those from *Feleud* (Aiud). The difference between the informal labor performed by each group depends on the intensity of their dependency on underpaid day laboring or non-contractual forms of laboring in the country. Those who have emigrated abroad through more-or-less organized networks are able to earn more than those who stayed at home. Yet all the types of informal labor (both domestic and non-domestic) are predominantly precarious in nature (i.e. are unstable, hazardous and stigmatizing). The presence of the Roma on the informal labor market is their way of

participating in broader economic life, and some Roma are trapped in this frame due to their lack of alternatives. This form of participation is not genuine integration or inclusion, but an obvious manifestation of an adverse type of incorporation which benefits those who would profit from the existence of a cheap labor force, and who would exploit the latter by maintaining them in persistent (in-work) poverty as components of a reserve army for the capitalist economy.

## Racialization of dispossessed Roma

As described elsewhere (Vincze 2014a, 2014b), in Romania, but not only there, one may observe a trend towards the racializing of Roma ethnicity, since in the case of 'the Roma' ethnicity is not predominantly defined through a shared language, history and culture, as is true with other (majority or minority) groups. Instead, Roma ethnicity is assumed to be shaped by the existence of an allegedly timeless 'Gypsy essence/blood', possibly manifested in 'physiological' features (such as skin color), but without any doubt also on some culture-based 'anti-social' practices that transform 'the Roma' into an inferior or 'other race', radically different from 'us' (i.e. 'civilized' ethno-national Romanians, Hungarians, etc.). At the level of our localities we observed that Roma were discursively defined through a specific set of attitudes and behaviors regarding schooling, work, social benefits and poverty, and when characterized by the majority they were mostly called 'Gypsies' (*țigani*, a pejorative term in Romanian) regardless of the group or 'nation' (*neam*) to which they belonged.

In order to exemplify this trend to racialization, in what follows my analysis only makes use of the views of employers about the employment opportunities of 'the Roma' or about employees with a Roma background with whom they were in direct contact. Employers usually started their confessions by affirming that they do not ask and do not care about the ethnicity of their workers, and they do not differentiate between Roma and non-Roma employees. By doing this, they denied that they judged people on the basis of their ethnicity and did not seem to recognize the effects of ethnic-based institutional discrimination on the Roma. Nevertheless, when talking about 'other Romanians' (i.e. not themselves), they remarked that they (the others) '*do not want to hire Gypsies because the latter are not reliable*', while also suggesting that there must be some truth in this generalization. However, they also recognized that exceptions exist; i.e., Roma who '*want to demonstrate that they work more and better than Romanians do*'.

On the basis of the interviews conducted at four urban companies (two in Aiud and two in Calafat) and another set of four interviews with employees of the two City Halls directly involved into the management of the guaranteed minimum wage system and the coordination of the effective work of the guaranteed minimum income beneficiaries, and also with one of the few businessmen from commune

Lungani, we were able to identify a whole range of 'explanations' for why Roma end up in particular jobs.

From the beginning, it is important to state that employers and non-Roma workmates appreciate the work of the Roma and the attitudes they have toward work *when* the Roma are in a subordinate position and have no power to demand labor-related rights: as underpaid day laborers in agriculture, as workers who undertake the dirtiest jobs that the Romanians would prefer not to do, or when working the compulsory hours in return for the minimum wage that they receive. Dominant among the 'explanations' for why these precarious domains are predominantly filled by Roma, or why the Roma are not employed in better-paid jobs, or why there are fewer of them in regular forms of employment, are arguments that link their precarious situation with personal and moral qualities that are generally associated with 'the Roma', and secondly, arguments that the Roma do not meet the criteria demanded of better occupations due to their low level of education and poor qualifications.

The diversity and depth of the list of arguments about 'their' negative personal or cultural features convinces us that the association of negative characteristics with Roma nature or culture is at the very base of racialized ethnic prejudices. Among the 'observed' traits that supposedly distinguish Roma from non-Roma are the following: unruliness, laziness, superficiality, disrespect for rules, dishonesty, a tendency to protest, to steal and to escape work.

Some of the characteristics listed above clearly show that employers do not like protesters or individuals who would contest the existing order, but instead prefer obedient and disciplined employees. Concluding that these characteristics are indications that Roma do not want to adapt to what is expected of them at the workplace, these 'explanations' go further in the direction of racialization: they racialize Roma by assigning them a position as a sub-human 'race' (without using the term as such) whose members cannot meet the requirements of 'normal personhood', and who should and could fit into society. This culminates in the often-heard expression: *'they are Gypsies, and Gypsies remain Gypsies, there is nothing we can do'*. In the face of such fatalistic explanations the only concession that individuals with these opinions make is that they have pity for 'them' and are willing to *'give them a second chance, though they do not deserve it'*.

Some of the non-Roma employers and workmates to whom we spoke claimed that non-Roma are favored by employers and enjoy the trust of their bosses, while Roma are marginalized both by the latter and by their workmates. Non-Roma do not socialize with Roma outside the workplace. The trend to separation, or of being in the company of 'one's own' at work was observed by many to be a mutually reciprocated phenomenon. However, those who supervise the public work of the minimum income beneficiaries observe that Roma and non-Roma usually stick together not only in their strictly defined working teams, but also during breaks: *'there are no differences, they have good relations, they help each other, everybody works hard so the objectives for*

*the day are achieved*' (however, these supervisors also recognize that more than 90% of street sweepers are Roma).

It was only when we asked our interviewees about ways to increase the employment levels of Roma that they recognized there must be some structural forces behind their unemployment status: a lack of jobs, a lack of public development strategies, attitudes of employers. But they also generally claimed that: *'not only Roma are affected by such problems'*. Once more, this approach reveals that people tend to call on more general/social/economic/political explanations for poverty, in-work poverty or unemployment that affects the majority population, while appealing to supposedly ethnic-based ('natural') causes for justifying these phenomena with 'the Roma'. As a result, 'explanations' in the latter case become justifications which support the proposition that, even faced with such distress, 'the Roma' deserve their situation in life. Hence, these attitudes lead to the creation of proposals for 'special solutions' for Roma, such as the following: the Roma should not receive child allowance if their children do not attend school; they should receive a special form of education; they should be forced to make an effort to become informed and not to expect help for nothing; they should not benefit from a minimum wage – and so on. The more balanced suggestions for solutions involve fostering shared responsibility between Roma workers, the state, and employers, according to which the latter should realize their potential to make a change by employing Roma, through this activity eliminating stereotypes that suggest that Roma do not want to work and are thieves, liars and beggars as a result of their allegedly negative 'ethnic characteristics'.

When engagement in informal labor overlaps with inhabitation of informal housing (a situation frequently encountered in 'Roma segments') it amplifies different types of insecurities and increases the vulnerability of the Roma to exploitation: the effect may be to push the Roma permanently to the edge of society, transforming them not only into a precarious working class, but also into non-citizens, dispossessed of socio-economic rights and personhood. This unjust process of 'integration' or the adverse incorporation of the impoverished Roma into the capitalist order, increases the precarious condition of those who are affected by it – not only in terms of their present situation, but also in the sense of denying them the structural capacity to strategically plan and remain 'competitive'. Threatened by insecurity on a daily basis, it is not to be expected that such individuals will make improvements to the condition of their homes, create economies or invest in the long-term schooling of their children. However, if they do not do these things, they become further racialized; i.e. removed from the category of persons or humans who are 'able' to conform to societal norms.

## Final conclusions

The article has addressed the topic of the current issue of the journal (processes of poverty and social exclusion) in terms of (re)framing the working class position

of the dispossessed Roma through a case study conducted in Romanian localities. Although the analysis was based on empirical material collected from a well-defined territory, it suggests that the precarization of working class Roma in these local contexts under modern capitalism is not unusual, but represents an endemic trend. In the article I recall material in order to develop a better understanding of the adverse incorporation of the dispossessed or working class Roma who are positioned at the intersection between spatial deprivation, labor-related destitution and racialization.

Furthermore, the article suggests locating this process of the precarization of working class Roma into the larger historical perspective of the adverse incorporation of the Roma into diverse socio-economic structures across different political regimes. For this reason I propose that the process should be understood as a class phenomenon which acts to integrate dispossessed Roma into the system as a labor force via transforming them into a commodity; one at risk of exploitation by the owners of different means of production. Such an approach proves to be useful for highlighting how enslaved Roma were adversely incorporated into pre-modern Romanian society, or how assimilated Roma were adversely incorporated into the project of socialist modernization. Throughout these processes, the racialization (albeit variable in nature) of 'the Gypsies' as a sub-human category that allegedly needs to be civilized was threaded through to justify these economic regimes. Highlighting the analytical potential of such a research approach, the focus of this article relates to how the adverse incorporation of the working class Roma into the capitalist economy is culminating in their precarization.

In identifying an innovative approach that is able to respond to the complexity of this subject, I propose addressing it as a manifestation of how the precarization of labor (or labor-related destitution) is interlinked with the precarization of housing (or spatial deprivation), observing that both are affected by informalization (of employment, on the one hand, and housing on the other) which both include an increase in insecurity and degradation. Most importantly, the examples analyzed have shown how these labor- and housing-related processes are underlain by the racialization of impoverished labor and the racialization of Roma ethnicity- and ultimately how, combined, these forces shape the precarization of working class Roma under the conditions of de-industrialization, the deregulation of labor and the housing market, and re-regulation of property relations after the dismantlement of socialist-era structures.

As stressed in this article, in contrast to Standing (2011) who coined the term, I do not consider the 'precariat' to be a new social class, but I observe more generally the phenomenon of the precarization of the working class. Most of the time, the individuals described in this paper are forced to sell their labor in the informal economy and are therefore dispossessed of the normal rights of employees. Alternatively (under the new Romanian Labor Code which supports employers

to the detriment of employees) they are employed in unsafe, underpaid jobs that dispossess them of the income that would assure them and their families a decent standard of living. Moreover, I observe that, in parallel with the precarization of their position on the labor market (the informalization of employment characterized by increased insecurity), 'unemployable' people are being pushed into accepting (and then are being kept locked into) insecure housing conditions and/or forms of informal housing which add to their precarious state due to the fact that the tenants of such locative spaces do not have legal ownership of such lands and homes and possess neither legal domicile nor a legal identity that entitles them to public services. Furthermore, such informal homes are typically located in areas dispossessed of development resources via redistribution policies that totally neglect the most marginalized, while actively supporting real estate investors who seek to profit from the privatization and financialization of the housing sector (Vincze 2013). Consequently, the interconnected informalization of employment and the informalization of housing (for which capital bears the responsibility, while avoiding paying the price, Breman 2013) is a manifestation of the process of precarization which is underway both in the domain of labor and housing. Moreover, these processes are being 'justified', thereby racializing the precarious working class (or the 'unemployable' working class with their insecure housing conditions): such Roma are perceived of as being an inferior species, and are effectively dispossessed of their universal human rights (insofar as the human rights of a 'person' are a form of competitiveness on a privatized labor and housing market).

Roma dispossessed in these multiple ways are part of the working class since they do not own any means of production, and are obliged to sell their labor; at the same time, they are one of the most exploited types of working class because they are subject to a high degree of precariousness as regards both their spatial and labor market position (the result of which is further precariousness, *ad infinitum*). Last, but not least, precarious Roma are a racialized working class since their socio-economic position is also a result of anti-Roma racism which is not typically 'explained' in reference to their working class position. On the contrary, such racism is 'justified' by mainstream public discourse on the basis of the Roma's presumed inborn/biological or cultural/social inferiority (which supposedly makes them less human), while racialization also associates 'the gypsy' with a precarious life and extends the negative stereotypes associated with precariousness towards all Roma, regardless of their class position. At the same time, a Roma who transcends his/her precarious position may be considered to leave behind his/her Gypsy identity. Through describing these processes, this analysis can be considered a contribution to the theory of labor and the 'mutability of class belonging' (Carbonella – Kasmir 2014). Through the examination of dispossessed Roma it has illustrated how, after de-industrialization, some of the working class has undergone a process of precarization, in some instances accompanied by racialization.

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## Appendices

### *Vignette 1. Portraits of spatial deprivation*

#### *1. Aiud city, Alba county*

Today, Roma from *Feleud* (formerly a separate village, administratively unified with the city of Aiud) live compactly on three streets (*Budu*, *Vale* and *Pășunii*); the entire area is better located than poorer urban vicinities such as *Poligon* and *Bufa* because it is connected to town by public transport. Roma from *Feleud* lack legal ownership documents for the land and the houses they live in; however, they still pay taxes to the local government. Due to their work abroad (almost one third of them travel to Switzerland for work) they manage to maintain a standard of living that is similar to that of the majority population. Due to this, they gain respect in the eyes of their neighbors. Some of them trade items brought from abroad in the markets of Aiud and in the neighboring villages. In terms of informal activities, Roma from *Vale* and *Pășunii* work in agriculture for the non-Roma from *Feleud*, or collect scrap iron. According to the local founding myths, the *Bufa* community from Aiud was established by Hungarian Roma families, migrants from Mureș County who arrived there in search of jobs well before the socialist era. While they always struggled with their isolation on the town's margins, their economic situation has now dramatically worsened and their ability to benefit from the town's resources is diminishing. Gaining access to other areas of the town is rather difficult for people from *Bufa* because there is no public transportation; moreover, the dirt access roads are in bad shape. Interviewed families from *Bufa* informed us that during the socialist era many adults in the area, their parents and grandparents worked for the local metallurgical company (*Întreprinderea Metalurgică Aiud*; hereafter IMA) or for the sanitation company in the town as unskilled workers. The informal economy supplied the only jobs that were available to them after 1990 when these firms were privatized and partially collapsed. However, even these jobs have recently become scarce. Roma families who were forcibly evicted from a centrally located building and relocated to *Poligon* without any housing facilities during socialist times moved into the town because jobs were available in local industries before 1990. They own no property or resources which could be used to help them recover from this most acute form of impoverishment which is aggravated by territorial segregation and cultural

stigmatization. In Poligon, access to electricity is poor (apart from an improvised connection), as is access to the public water and heating systems.

### 2. Calafat city, Dolj county

Trade-oriented Calafat has attracted Roma groups from the larger region of Oltenia since the late 19th century. Such Roma – after gaining the right to free movement after the abolition of slavery – arrived seeking opportunities to trade their hand-made products. This was particularly true of the *rudari* Roma (known locally as ‘the wretched’/ *necăjiții*, a term that is often used for the situation of the destitute). They settled on the margins of Calafat near the Danube, since the river provided them with raw material for their crafts (spoon making, wood carving), and for a long time lived in mud huts. During the socialist era (when the town’s population grew significantly due to rapid industrialization) they abandoned their traditional crafts and took up employment in different sectors of the local economy until the 1990s when the town’s industry-based economy collapsed. At the beginning of the 1970s the mayor of the time provided them with a piece of land on which they started to build their houses. Even though a significant number of the group once worked in socialist industries, and some of them are skilled workers, they are now unemployed. Adults do day laboring in marginal economic activities (waste collection), while young people have no formal education and are unemployed. The Romanians who live close to the *rudari* Roma neighborhood have no contact with them. The territorial boundaries that separate them from the rest of the town, signaled by the nearby blocks of flats, are strict social boundaries. As the Roma settled in Calafat, the late-comer *spoitori* Roma gave up their traditional crafts and also took up employment in socialist factories; however, they also migrated on a seasonal basis for agricultural work in Dobrogea, and bought houses in the Danube area of Calafat close to the town center. After 1990 they rapidly opted to take up seasonal migration abroad which gave them the financial resources to buy new houses in their home country. Since they perceive themselves as people who are always able to make a (good) living, they are locally defined as ‘the resourceful ones’ (*descurcăreții*). However, the community is somewhat internally divided since rich *spoitori* inhabit dwellings nearest to the town center, while the poorer ones live on the margins of *Dunării* district. The former reject the latter but ‘hire’ them for domestic work, or lend them money through a system of usury. Friendship and kinship relations between Romanians and *spoitori* occur for economic reasons. Romanians seldom enter into marriage with wealthy Roma, but more often the latter ask Romanians to be the godparents of their children.

### 3. Commune Lungani, Iași County

In the past, the rural area of Lungani in today’s Iași county and the laws according to which Roma were assigned lands after their emancipation from slavery provided Roma with structural opportunities for farming. Nowadays, however, very few of

them own land, while some of them keep smaller or larger flocks of sheep. The Roma groups in the villages under scrutiny (*Crucea* and *Zmeu*) were substantially different in terms of their social position, material conditions and occupations, both in the past and the present. Locally, they are distinguished by their alleged ability to progress, while the distinction between the 'go-ahead'/ *răsăriții* and the 'left-behind'/ *întârziatii* (sometimes even known as *retardații* ('handicapped')) overlaps with a classification that can be made according to their traditional crafts (*ursari* versus *lăieși* or *vătrași* Roma). Those who were once domestic slaves and dealt with animal husbandry (*vătrași* or *lăieși* Roma) after settling in *Crucea* village remained strongly dependent on the natural resources of the area. Nowadays they belong to the poorest strata in the village and their cheap labor force is put to use by land owners. The *ursari* Roma of *Zmeu* have a different legacy and now survive in different conditions to the *lăieși* portrayed above. These Roma were known as people who could tame bears and teach them to dance as a form of entertainment. During the era of slavery the *ursari* enjoyed some freedom of movement as the boyars who owned them encouraged them to undertake their trades and artistic activities as sources of income. They were known as good metalworkers and musicians. After 1990 they rapidly went abroad since the latter occupation enabled them to make a living, and to improve their homes in Romania.

## Vignette 2. Narratives of labor-related destitution

### 1. Patterns of employment and informal laboring in the socialist era

*'Gypsies, Romanians, and Hungarians all worked at IMA. And at a moment's notice they fired us all. We worked until 1994. They sold the factory. It was better in the past because I had a job. Now, you are a skilled worker but you do not have a job. Back then, they hired you wherever you went. But now they destroyed everything.'* (Roma man, Poligon-Aiud).

*'I had no contracts before 1990. I do not have a work card, or work record. There was a team leader who gathered people together. Team leaders were Romanians. They told us right at the beginning how much we would earn. At the farm we went to we raised a pig, slaughtered it and brought it home. There were also Romanians there at the farms closer to Calafat. Then I worked at the canning factory for two and a half years until the factory went bankrupt in 1996 and they fired us all.'* (Rudar man, Calafat).

*'My great grandparents carved spoons; my grandfather was hired as glazer and as bricklayer until he got fired. I do not have a job right now. Men today go to Romanians' houses and they are 'hired' to work the land or they build houses.'* (Rudar woman, Calafat).

*'This was work that Romanians would not have done. This is why we got ill, this work pushed me completely down, we were the ones who really worked hard.'* (Roma man, Bufa-Aiud).

*'My former colleague from work looks for me if he has some work around his house, and I go and labor for him on a daily basis.'* (Roma man, Feleud-Aiud)

*'My father did not own much land. He had two horses, sometimes only one, and transported furniture because there were no cars, and so he carried furniture to people. My grandmother worked at the toilets, she cleaned toilets.'* (Roma man, Feleud-Aiud).

*'I started to work when I was 13. They [others] took out the dirt (...), melted the iron and what remained was a kind of iron rind which they took away and threw away. And others bought it as scrap iron. I used to go there with a sledge hammer with some guys older than me and we broke down this rind iron and sold it.'* (Roma man, Feleud-Aiud).

*'I was never employed. Only as a day laborer. I worked for various people, I pulled, dug, picked. It is not shameful to work. You work to earn your bread. No one would give you anything if you stayed home. It [money/resources] does not fall from the sky.'* (Roma woman, Poligon-Aiud).

*'I remember that my grandparents...this grandmother of mine, who did not work, she kept pigs back then. You had to. She kept pigs but not more than two or three, and she raised big pigs of 200 or 200 kilograms. She just did that.'* (Roma man, Feleud-Aiud).

*'My grandparents were *lingurari*. Now my seven siblings are in Spain working as seasonal workers. They work on olive and garlic farms. In the past I used to go with my family to herd cows but I did not like it. I liked to work in greenhouses. I started working in them when I was 14. Then I worked at the tobacco factory in Calafat for almost five years. After this I worked as day laborer on the town hall lawn, but I could not stay employed because I had children at home. Only my husband works now, as day laborer, he chops wood or does whatever he can find to do.'* (Rudar woman, Calafat).

## 2. The predominance of informal labor and 'jobs for Roma' after socialism

*'In autumn or late summer we used to go to pick grapes in Dobrogea. We came back with a pig and 40 kg of flowers for the winter. [...] at home we went to collect tree stumps and carried them with a cart. Now if they catch us they fine us one million lei (or 100 new lei) for a cart full of tree stumps. We get seven or eight hundred thousand lei, or 70-80 new lei for a cart, and it takes about three or four hours for two people, me and my son, to fill the cart. Nevertheless, we go because we do not have anything else to do for a living. Now someone has stolen my horse.'* (Rudar man, Calafat).

*'Some of my friends helped me meet these bigger patrons who have big farms. And I went to work for them. (...) They call me and say they need 6-7 or 10 women and 20 men, or however many they need. I find them here and there. I choose the ones that I know will work. If I take one who does not work, the patron sees that they do not work and picks on me. (...) if one does not work, one is not paid.'* (Roma man, Feleud-Aiud).

*'I knew some friends who worked at the slaughterhouse and they said they needed help because the employees did not want to take out the dung and clean up the place after they had finished slaughtering the animals. And I went there and I liked what I had to do. (...) I got paid weekly at that time, and they gave me one or two buckets of meat, and things like that. Just when I was entering into discussion about them hiring me, the slaughterhouse went bankrupt.'* (Roma man, Feleud-Aiud).

*'My wife was employed at the sanitation company. She worked there for six or seven years. She does not work anymore; they put her on unemployment benefit. There are people who had a long work history there, but they are unemployed now. They explained that they had too*

many employees. And if they did not like your face, they fired you. They hire Romanians. Half of all the employees are Romanian now. I see that they are making changes. They have fired many Roma who worked there for years.' (Roma man, Feleud-Aiud).

'After graduating from school, we worked at the CAP. We were skinny little kids, my brothers and me. We worked there for about three years because my mother could not cope with us. They wanted to take us to the correctional school, but my mother did not let them. Then I left school and went to work with the herd. We were six brothers altogether, and they paid us a kilogram a day. (...) Until autumn we put aside meat, corn and food and we lived on that.' (Roma man, Feleud-Aiud).

'They could not employ me because I was only 17, but I got hired there casting iron, someone took responsibility for me. Now I am waiting for my retirement benefit at 65, but will I make it to that? I was an unskilled worker. I loaded the cart under the ground, and they put the cast iron into a furnace and poured the melted iron. There was dust ... I helped everyone. They worked in shifts, one, two, and three, and when I worked on the night shift from eleven until seven in the morning, the others slept and I unloaded iron and stone from the carts – they were sleeping while I unloaded 6-7-8 carts.' (Roma man, Bufa-Aiud).

### 3. Trans-border seasonal labor migration

'It was not that easy because I had to live in the bushes for two weeks. Caritas gave me food in the evening. When you hear people speaking Italian on TV it seems easy, but when I wanted to engage in conversation, I became blocked and could not speak or explain to them what I wanted. At first, I believed I knew, but I did not. I understand some Italian, because it is a Latin language, and you can understand it easily, but I do not really know it. This is the truth. I traveled by train without a ticket or money in my pocket. I stood in the bathroom to avoid the ticket controller. And I stopped in F. Then I stepped onto a bus and went to a village nearby and I walked for about 10-15 minutes. I saw a woman of about 60 and went up to her, I took the broom from her and showed her I wanted to work. I was frightened that she would call the carabinieri, thinking that I was going to steal something. She told me to wait. I understood that. Then her son came there and I went with him into the fields. Whatever he told me, I replied with 'si'. I thought he was asking me about work. And gradually he taught me how to work with various machines.' (Man with mixed family background, Bethlen Gabor Street, Aiud).

'We borrowed money with interest from cositorari. The interest rate was almost 100 per cent. We wanted to go to work abroad, but we soon realized that we had to work six or seven months to pay back the loan. When we could have started to work for ourselves, they told us that the work was finished. We gave up; we do not want to leave again in these conditions.' (Rudar woman, Calafat).

Table 1. Number of companies in the localities

Data from the database: The List of Firms from Romania, Borg Design, 2011

Clusters and localities	Companies with from 1-10 employees	Total number of companies
<b>IAȘI</b>		
Tg Frumos	128	145
Lungani	9	10
Ciohorâni	5	5
Mironeasa	4	4
Stolniceni- Prăjescu	7	7
Total	153	171
<b>ARAD</b>		
Curtici	63	88
Covăsînț	13	14
Pîlu	10	10
Șiria	39	44
Macea	25	25
Total	150	181
<b>DOLJ</b>		
Calafat	118	133
Bârca	11	15
Cetate	11	12
Negoi	10	10
Sadova	15	15
Total	165	185
<b>ALBA</b>		
Aiud	284	338
Unirea	26	28
Lunca Mureșului	10	10
Hopârta	3	3
Sâncel	12	12
Total	335	391
<b>CĂLĂRAȘI</b>		
Oltenița	419	481
Chirnogi	42	43
Frumușani	22	24
Spantov	9	9
Curcani	19	22
Total	511	579

Diagram 1. Unemployment rate

Courtesy of Daniel Tudora

Comparison of Alba cluster localities (red bullets) compared a) to other clusters (left-hand column), b) to other localities from Alba county (middle column), and c) to other localities from other clusters (right-hand column)

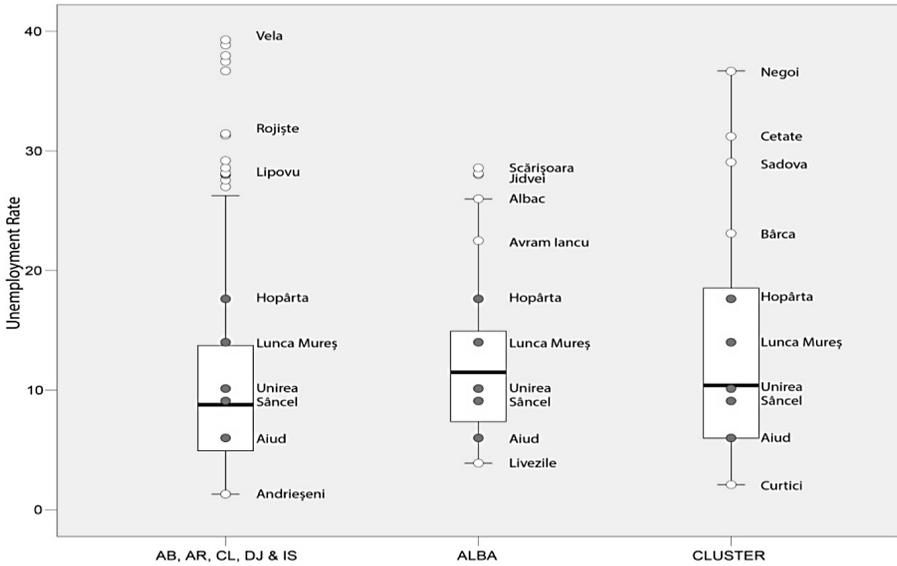


Table 2. Economically active population and rate of employment

Data compilation by the author based on statistics

provided by the National Institute of Statistics, May 2013

County	Localities	Average number of employees, 2011	Potentially economically active population (individuals aged from 15-64), 2011	Total employed from potentially economically active population (%)
Alba	County Total	73,983	260,876	28.35
-	Aiud	5,464	19,163	28.51
-	Hopârta	42	668	6.28
-	Lunca Mureşului	70	1,677	4.17
-	Sâncel	70	1,652	4.17
-	Unirea	227	3,267	6.94
Arad	County Total	111,434	321,304	34.68
-	Curtici	1,770	5,653	31.14
-	Covăsiņ	252	1,810	13.92
-	Macea	834	4,771	17.48
-	Pilu	225	1,390	16.18
-	Şiria	949	6,013	15.78
Călărăşi	County Total	40,611	207,131	19.60
-	Olteniņa	5,976	20,052	29.80
-	Chirnovi	943	5,161	18.27
-	Curceni	217	3,404	6.37
-	Frumuşani	197	2,865	6.87
-	Spanţov	128	2,989	4.28
Dolj	County Total	115,041	484,327	23.75
-	Calafat	3,209	12,628	25.41
-	Bârca	107	2,257	4.74
-	Cetate	135	3,345	5.09
-	Negoi	66	1,296	5.09
-	Sadova	189	5,287	3.57
Iaşi	County Total	134,640	569,152	23.65
-	Târgu Frumos	2,078	10,339	20.09
-	Ciohorăni	64	1,285	4.98
-	Lungani	145	3,281	4.41
-	Mironeasa	138	2,746	5.02
-	Stolniceni-Prăjescu	152	3,589	4.23

Matrix 1.

*Juxtaposition of patterns of ethno-spatial segregation and economic deprivation*